also the private sector, to identify catalysts and synergise strategies for the unimpeded growth of tourism industry in the country;

(b) if so, the results thereof, especially the bottlenecks/shortcomings noticed in the mechanism; and

(c) the details of fresh initiatives being taken to stream line the existing machinery to speed up the process of consultations to help accelerate the pace of growth of tourism in country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM{SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) to (c) The Government has set up a mechanism for Inter-Ministerial consultations for tourism related issues. Further, in order to have a forum which can advise the Government on various policy matters concerning tourism and act as a Think Tank, the National Tourism Advisory Council is being re-constituted which, *inter-alia,* has representation from the field of travel and tourism management as also Presidents of various tourism related Associations.

Tourist Traffic

550. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the tourist traffic in India is dwindling over the years;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is also a fact that in comparison to other foreign tourism destinations, overseas tourists find India a costly tourist centre, resulting in their travelling to other tourism centres; and

(d) if so, what measures are proposed to be taken by Government to make tourism in India more interesting and competitve?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM(SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) Foreign tourist arrivals to India in the last 5 years are as follows:—

Year	TouristArrivals (Million)	% Change
2000	2.65	6.7
2001	2.54	4.2
2002	2.38	-6.0
2003	2.73	14.3
2004(Jan-Nov.)	2.98*	24.0

* Provisional

(b) The reasons for decline in foreign tourist traffic to India during the years 2001 and 2002, are the September 11 incident in the USA, war in Afghanistan, terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament, tension on the Indo-Pak border and the travel advisories issued by a number of foreign Governments. However, the tourist traffic to India has increased during the years 2003 and 2004 despite a recession of about 1 % in the tourist traffic around the world during the year 2003.

(c) and (d) India is a long haul destination and 83% of the tourist traffic arrives by air. This makes India a more expensive destination. In order to make India a competitive destination, from time to time the Ministry takes up with the concerned Central and State agencies for liberalization of air access, rationalization of taxes, reduction in the multiplicity and rates of taxes, etc. on accommodation, transport and on other facilities being used by the tourists.

Development of religious tourist spots

†551. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) the number of tourist spots in the country which have been developed, if any, as religious tourist spots, State-wise; and

(b) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM(SHRIMATI RENUKACHOWDHURY): (a) and (b) Development of tourist/pilgrim places is primarily undertaken by the State Governments/UT Administrations. However, the Ministry of Tourism also sanctions development projecs at tourist/pilgrim sites of national and international importance in various States/UTs in consultation with them. Some major development projects have been sanctioned at Kurkshetra, Haridwar/Rishikesh, Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Puri, Somnath etc. during the 10th Plan so far.

Special tourism zone in Kerala

552. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN:
SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI:

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to slate: (a) whether Government have received a proposal for a Special tourism zone in Kerala;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.